



CELLPHONE BILLING TRANSPARENCY

What We Heard



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

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Background

Cellphones play an important part in British Columbians' daily lives. Ninety-two percent of B.C. households have at least one cellphone, whereas only 59.3% of homes maintain a landline. British Columbians use their cellphones for a wide variety of uses: whether for voice calling, accessing the internet, using web-based applications or for sharing photo and videos with friends and family.

British Columbians are among the country's most active users of cellphones. Mobile devices and plans are widely advertised and available for purchase in locations across the province. It is not unusual to hear about wireless services in advertisements and media reports, including the latest types of plans and newest devices available for purchase. Some British Columbians even get up early and wait in lines just to get those latest plans and devices.

Cellphones are an area of intense consumer interest. If you ask, many British Columbians will have a "cellphone story" that involves an issue observed or experienced when purchasing or using a cellphone service. These sometimes involve a contract issue, an unexpected charge on a monthly bill (i.e. "bill shock") or a dispute with a service provider. A range of consumer issues regarding cellphones appears to persist, despite the existence of the federal Wireless Code¹ and the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-television Services (CCTS) complaint process.²

In spring 2019, the B.C. Government announced that it is taking action to strengthen consumer protections around cellphone contracts and billing, beginning with a public consultation and legislative review. Government also stated that it would encourage the federal government to deliver more affordable cellphone options. These commitments were made in the 2019 B.C. Throne Speech.

About the Survey

From May 29 to July 5, 2019, British Columbians were invited to complete a short online survey to share their views and experiences on cellphones. The survey provided an opportunity for the Province to hear directly from people on a wide range of cellphone topics. It was posted on the government's public engagement website, govTogetherBC, and advertised through social media and a province-wide news release, which was picked up by various media outlets throughout B.C.

While there have been surveys regarding cellphones in other jurisdictions, this was the first province-wide undertaking by the BC government to examine this issue. Questions covered a variety of current issues and topics, including: contracts and billing; business practices; value and cost; and consumer rights and responsibilities.

1. The Wireless Code is a mandatory code of conduct for providers of retail mobile wireless voice and data services. Established by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) in 2013, and updated in 2017, the Wireless Code provides consumers with rights such as: plain language contracts, unlocked phones, caps on data overage and data roaming charges, maximum two-year contracts, and a 15-day trial period to cancel a contract.

2. The Commission for Complaints for Telecom-Television Services (CCTS) resolves complaints from Canadian consumers and small business retail customers regarding wireless services. Created by the CRTC in 2007, the CCTS is an independent, industry-funded agency.

Survey Results

A total of 15,549 survey responses were received during the consultation period. People from all regions of the province completed the survey, particularly in the higher population density areas of the Lower Mainland/Fraser Valley and Vancouver Island. Individuals from all age demographics and levels of household income provided input. Survey respondent characteristics, including cellphone user and demographic profiles, are included in the Appendix.

Analysis of the survey results was completed by Ipsos Reid, including the report's key findings and detailed survey results. The key findings highlight consumers' main experiences and issues purchasing or using a cellphone plan. The detailed survey results provide in-depth analysis of the responses to each survey question. These include British Columbians' recommendations on how to enhance cellphone contract and billing transparency.

Respondents could provide other or additional text comments for some questions. These comments have been aggregated, with sample comments included, as they provide rich insights into specific issues and concerns raised by British Columbians.

While the survey results affirm some widely-held perceptions about cellphone services, other responses highlight less-known issues and concerns to British Columbians. This input will help identify ways to strengthen BC consumer protection around contracts and billing, and assist government with next steps and a legislative review. Some of the input concerns areas of federal jurisdiction, which includes regulation of telecommunications in Canada.

Report Notes

Survey respondents were permitted to skip questions. Only a small number of respondents chose not to answer each question. Those responses are not included in summary statistics.

Because of rounding, some totals may not add up to 100% and some summary statistics may not be the sum of their component parts.

Sample comments in each section have been selected, by relevance, from content provided by respondents in "other" and "additional comments" text fields. Some quotes have been edited for clarity and grammar.

Summary of Key Findings

Key finding 1: Cellphone contracts and bills are not easy to understand

Only two-in-ten (22%) respondents agreed their cellphone contract was easy to understand. The main issues with contracts were: inadequate explanation of all potential charges, excessive contract length and hard-to-understand terms and conditions.

Only about one-third (36%) of respondents agreed their cellphone bill is easy to understand. Top areas of concern included: inadequate explanation of charges, insufficient explanation of levels of usage and lack of clarity on how to dispute a charge.

Key finding 2: People have had issues with their cellphone contract or bill

Only three-in-ten (29%) respondents agreed they have not had an issue with their cellphone contract or monthly bill. The most common issues included: an unexpected charge for usage (especially a data overage charge), the cost of a plan changing without knowledge or consent, and an unexpected service charge (especially fees to change plan or to connect/reconnect). Additional comments indicated issues with service providers changing contract terms and conditions.

Key finding 3: Most have disputed an issue with their contract or bill and few were fully satisfied with the result

Six-in-ten (62%) respondents said they have disputed an issue with their cellphone contract or bill, with the vast majority (96%) doing so by contacting their cellphone service provider. Very few (3%) filed a complaint with the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-television Services (CCTS) or went through an arbitration process with the cellphone provider.

Those who launched a dispute were generally left less than fully satisfied, regardless of the dispute method. Satisfaction with the result was highest among those who went to the CCTS, at just 36% satisfied. Outcomes were worse among those who contacted their provider (22% satisfied) or who went through an arbitration process (11% satisfied).

Key finding 4: Many have experienced multiple issues and concerns when shopping for a cellphone service

A majority of survey respondents have experienced multiple issues and concerns when shopping for a cellphone service. These included: potential charges not being fully explained (72%), contract terms not being fully explained (65%), misleading information (59%), not having enough opportunity to read the contract (57%) and aggressive sales practices (56%).

Key finding 5: Cost and value perceptions are very poor

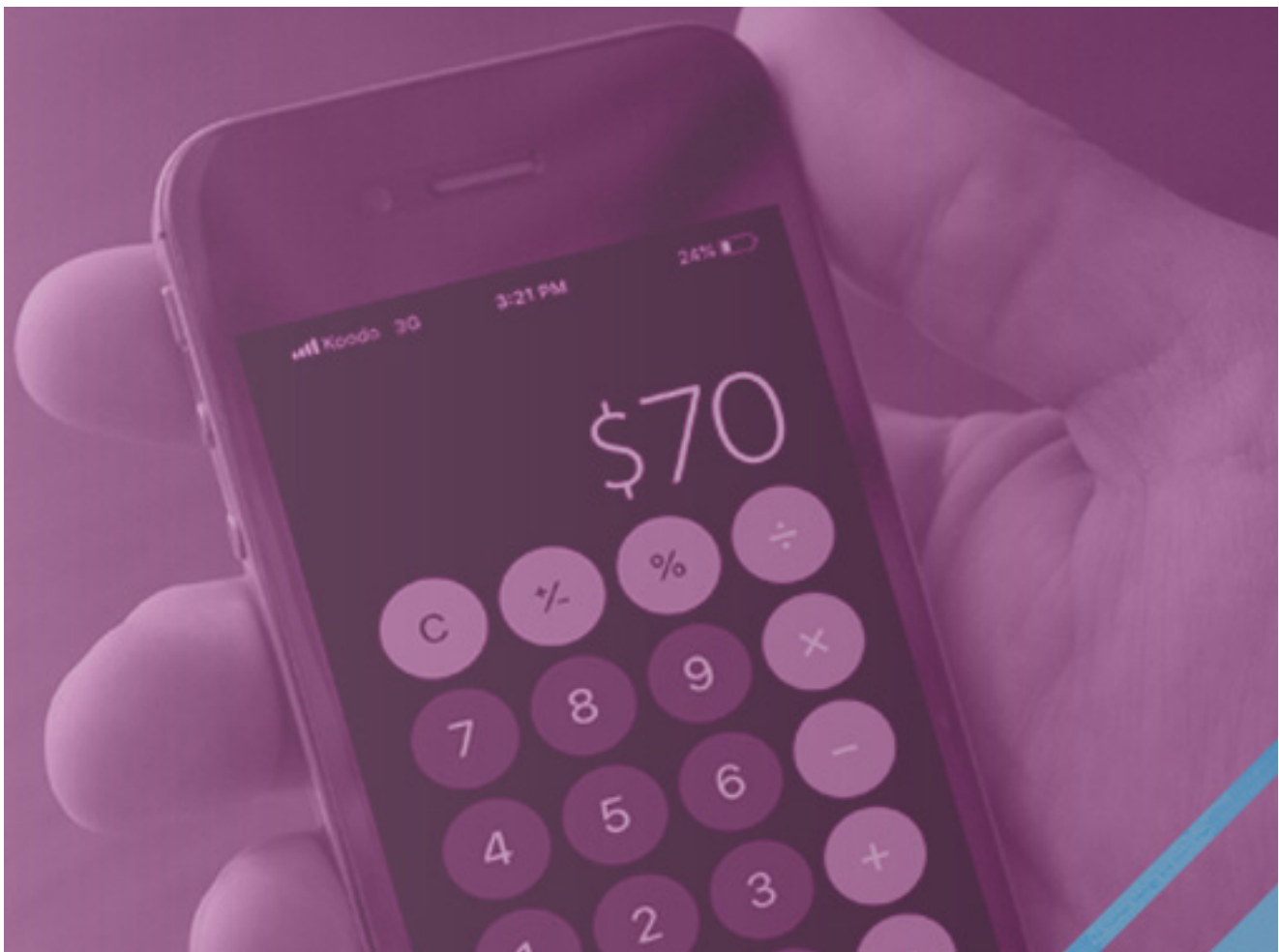
Only 6% of respondents agreed the cost of their cellphone service is reasonable and only 9% agreed they get good value for their cellphone service. Seven-in-ten (71%) respondents also provided additional comments critical of the lack of affordability and the high cost of cellphone services.

Top suggestions for reducing the cost of cellphone services included: more retail competition/innovation, government regulation, and providing more choices for low/mid-use cellphone plans.

Key finding 6: Most consumers don't know their rights and responsibilities when it comes to cellphone services

Only two-in-ten (18%) respondents agreed they know their rights and responsibilities as a consumer when it comes to cellphone services. Even fewer agreed they are familiar with either the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-television Services complaint process (12%) or the federal Wireless Code (8%).

Top suggestions for increasing awareness of rights/responsibilities included: better information at point-of-sale, better information in cellphone bills, and public education/awareness initiatives.



Detailed Survey Results

Contracts and Billing

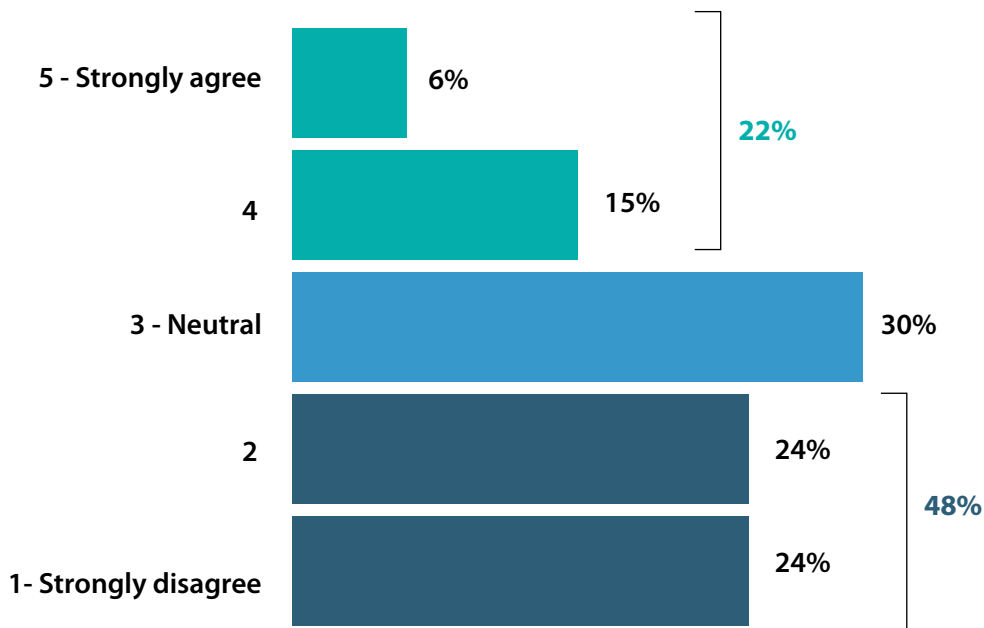
The survey asked British Columbians about their experiences with cellphone contracts and billing. Topics included contract and billing issues, types of disputes and dispute resolution processes.

Several questions asked respondents to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with a statement. All agree/disagree questions were asked on a 1 to 5 scale where 5 meant 'strongly agree' and 1 meant 'strongly disagree'. Throughout this report, answer choices 4 and 5 are summarized as agreement, answer choices 1 and 2 are summarized as disagreement and answer choice 3 is treated as a neutral/neither response.

Are cellphone contracts easy to understand?

Only two-in-ten respondents (22%) agreed with the statement that 'when I signed up for my cellphone service, the contract was easy to understand.' Almost half (48%) disagreed with this statement, while three-in-ten (30%) respondents were neutral.

Agreement: When I signed up for my cellphone service, the contract was easy to understand.



Q: What is your level of agreement with the following statements? (Select one per statement)
Base: All respondents (n=15,118) excluding not applicable (n=367) and no answer (n=64)

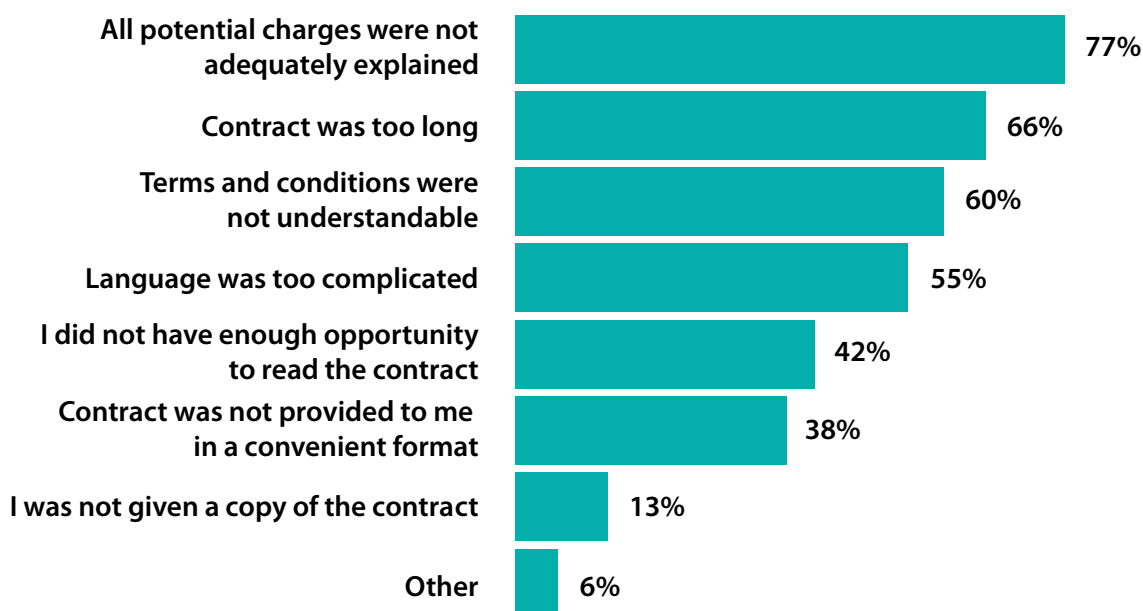
What parts of cellphone contracts are not easy to understand?

Those who disagreed that the contract was easy to understand were asked to indicate the issue they experienced. They could choose from a list of seven items (multiple responses were allowed) or write in an 'other' response.

The top three reasons why contracts were not easy to understand included: all potential charges were not adequately explained (77%), the contract was too long (66%) and the terms and conditions were not understandable (60%). A majority (55%) of respondents indicated that the language was too complicated.

Other notable reasons were: not enough opportunity given to read the contract (42%) and contract was not provided in a convenient format (38%).

Part of contract not easy to understand.



Q: What part of the contract was not easy to understand? (Select all that apply)

Base: Disagree contract is easy to understand (n=7,243)

Sample comments:

"Consumers can't be expected to understand complicated contract terms, and a system where a simple mistake can result in overage charges which can easily double or triple your regular bill is not reasonable."

"My biggest challenges have been not getting a full explanation of charges up front, contracts that are too long and poorly written to understand, and high rates with little flexibility."

"I shouldn't need to consult a Rosetta stone to understand what I'm getting."

"The contract language needs to be simple, easy to comprehend for everyone from teens to new immigrants to seniors who may sign up for a plan. Full disclosure of costs, hidden costs, and phone subsidies needs to be crystal clear, and data plans and add-ons (and whether they be temporary or monthly fees)."

"I was not given a copy of the contract until transaction was made. Sales staff refused to give a copy no matter what store I went to."

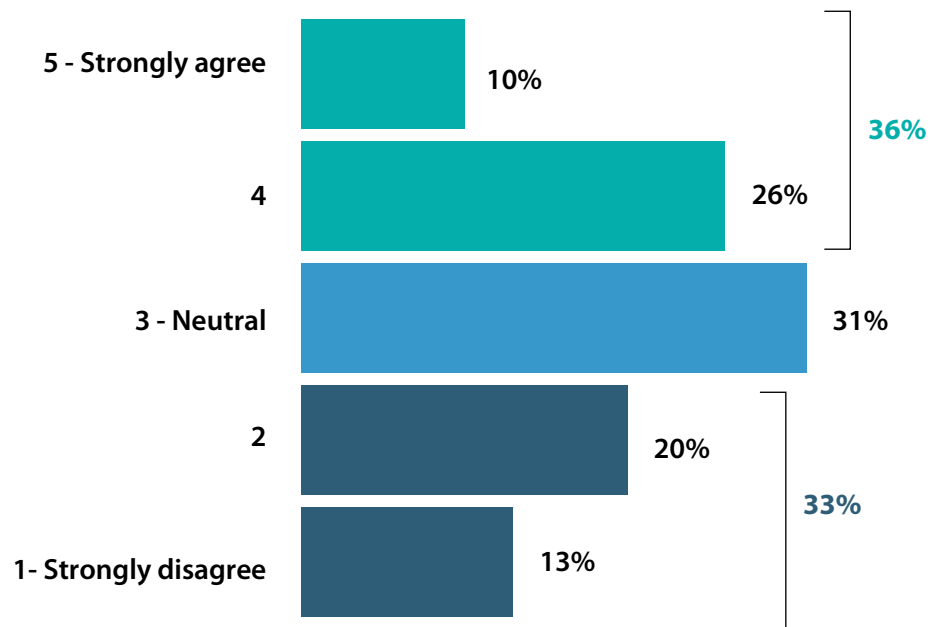
Other comments:

Six percent of respondents to this question wrote in an 'other' response. Some of the other themes raised in responses included: service providers changing contract terms during the contract period, contract not being as promised/as expected and customer not being given a copy of the contract to review until after signing.

Are cellphone bills easy to understand?

Respondents had divided opinions in their level of agreement with the statement 'my cellphone bill is easy to understand.' Slightly more than one-third (36%) agreed their bill is easy to understand, while a similar percentage (33%) disagreed and three-in-ten (31%) were neutral.

Agreement: My cellphone bill is easy to understand.



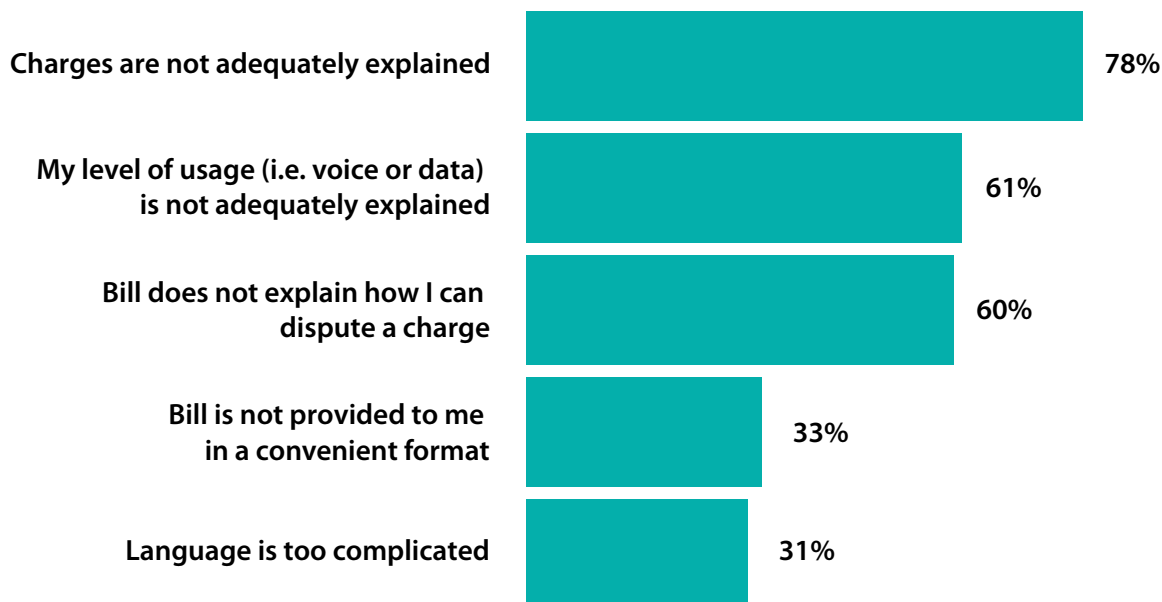
Q: What is your level of agreement with the following statements? (Select all that apply)
Base: All respondents (n=15,223) excluding not applicable (n=206) and no answer (n=120)

What parts of cellphone bills are not easy to understand?

Those who disagreed that their bill is easy to understand were asked to indicate what part of their bill is not easy to understand. They could choose from a list of five items (multiple responses were allowed).

Three reasons stood out for why the cellphone bill is not easy to understand: charges are not adequately explained (78%), level of usage is not adequately explained (61%) and bill does not explain how to dispute a charge (60%).

Part of bill not easy to understand.



Q: What part of your cell phone bill is not easy to understand? (Select all that apply)
Base: Disagree bill easy to understand (n=5,059)

Sample comments:

"[We need] more transparent billing practices. Bills should reflect the most recent charges and credits and changes made to a current bill should be adjusted in the current bill rather than carrying it over to the next monthly bill."

"The bill is far too lengthy to review or print."

"The information provided regarding cellphone usage in regards to roaming and data usages is for me very confusing and convoluted."

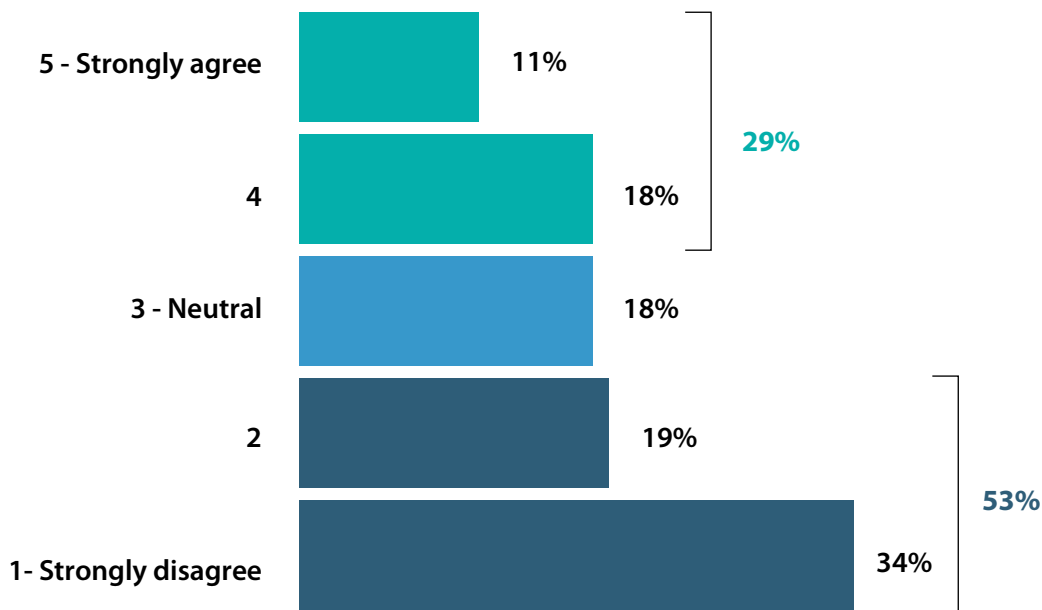
"Carrier must supply contact information to resolve disputes. A website Q&A is not acceptable."

"It seemed like the wording in the contract didn't match the wording used on my bill or in person with the sales associate. Hard to see where it all lined up, or even if it did."

Have British Columbians had issues with their cellphone contract or monthly bill?

Respondents were asked for their level of agreement with the statement 'I have not had an issue with my cellphone contract or monthly bill.' Only three in ten (29%) agreed with the statement, indicating that they have not had an issue. A slight majority (53%) disagreed with the statement, which means they have had an issue with their contract or bill. Two in ten (18%) were neutral.

Agreement: I have not had an issue with my cellphone contract or monthly bill.



*Q: What is your level of agreement with the following statements? (Select one per statement)
Base: All respondents (n=15,174) excluding not applicable (n=250) and no answer (n=125)*

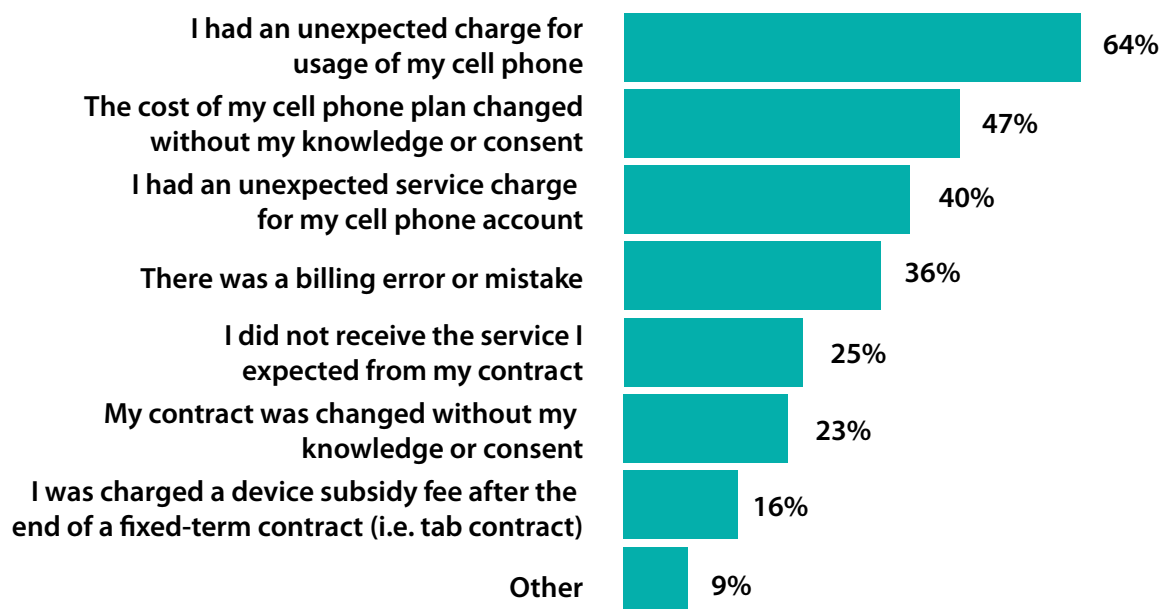
What issues have British Columbians had with their contract or bill?

Those who indicated having had a problem with their contract or bill were asked to identify the issue they experienced. Respondents could choose from a list of seven items (multiple responses were allowed) or write in an 'other' response.

The number one issue reported was an unexpected charge for usage of a cellphone (64%). Other top issues included: the cost of cellphone plan changed without my knowledge or consent (47%), an unexpected service charge for the cellphone account (40%) and a billing error or mistake (36%).

Approximately one-quarter of respondents indicated that they did not receive the services they expected from the contract (25%), or had their contract changed without their knowledge or consent (23%).

Issue experienced with contract or bill.



Q: What was the issue you experienced with your cell phone contract or bill? (Select all that apply)
Base: Disagree not issue with contract or bill (n=8,066)

Sample comments:

"Every month we have additional charges which we don't understand and they keep trying to up our plan for coverage."

"Company guaranteed a fixed price for a contract term, but upped the base price anyway before it was over."

"My cell provider is the only bill I can no longer get sent a paper copy of. The billing fluctuates and I need visibility. If I call them to ask my bill balance I get charged \$10.00 I also get charged this amount if I inquire about my contract terms."

"The company made a big billing error and wouldn't readjust my bill until after I paid them the full amount!"

"Contract is not binding on the company. Company can change terms whenever they want, but if I want to change anything there are consequences like my bills will be higher or I pay for differences or other charges."

Other comments:

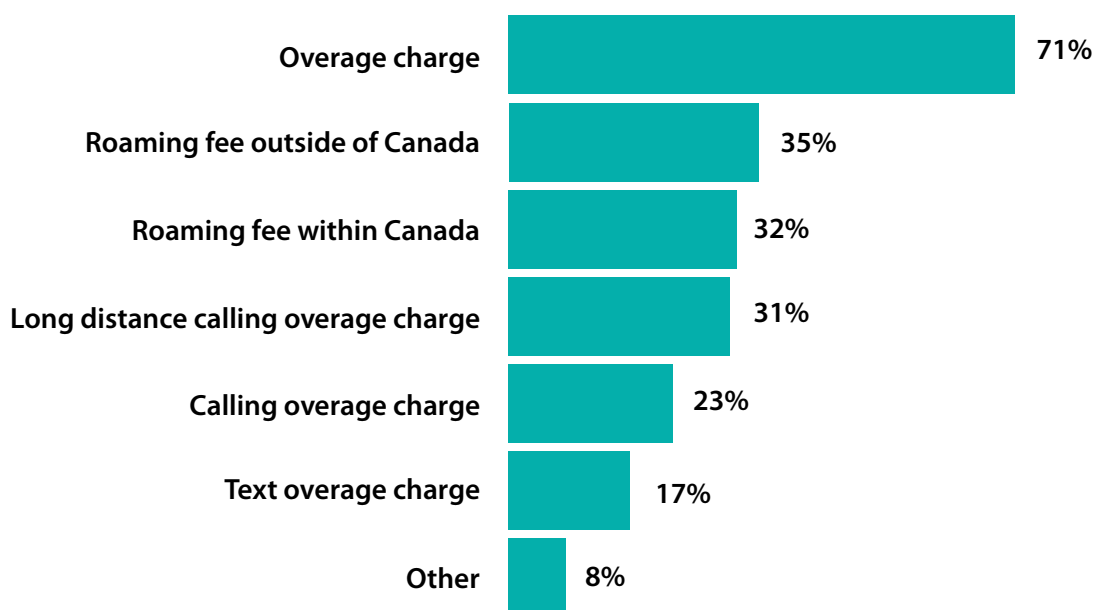
Nine percent of respondents to this question wrote in an 'other' response. Some of the other themes raised in responses included: promotions/discounts not being honoured, issues with cancellation or renewal; and concerns with up-front billing.

What are the most common types of unexpected charges for cellphone usage?

Those who indicated they had an unexpected charge for usage of their cellphone were asked to identify the issue they experienced. Respondents could choose from a list of six items (multiple responses were allowed) or by writing in an 'other' response.

By far the number one unexpected charge was for data overage (71%). Other unexpected charges included a roaming fee outside of Canada (35%), a roaming fee within Canada (32%) and a long distance calling overage charge (31%).

Type of unexpected charge for usage.



Q: What was unexpected charge for usage of your cell phone? (Select all that apply)
Base: Had unexpected charge for usage (n=5,199)

Sample comments:

"Data charges should be better regulated and include a limit on how much a provider can charge for data overage fees. My current plan charges me \$20 if I use an additional 1 gigabyte of data than what is included in my plan. Why can't we have unlimited data like the US for a reasonable price?"

"I was recently charged \$7.00 for incurring 149 kilobytes of data, which actually occurred in the minute it took me to turn on my phone and text my agreement to purchasing a data top-up."

"I paid an extra fee ahead of travelling out of country to avoid roaming fees but when I received my statement, I was charged both the extra fee and roaming charges."

“Long distance calls are incredibly expensive. No one should have to pay \$37 for less than a half-hour call to a relative in the USA.”

“All overages should be capped and require consent like data. Far too many times people are capped at \$100 roaming data but have hundreds or thousands of unbilled roaming voice and text charges.”

Other comments:

Eight percent of respondents to this question wrote in an ‘other’ response. However, most of these comments were either off-topic or repeated the answer choices provided to respondents. Only a few additional unexpected charges for usage were mentioned including:

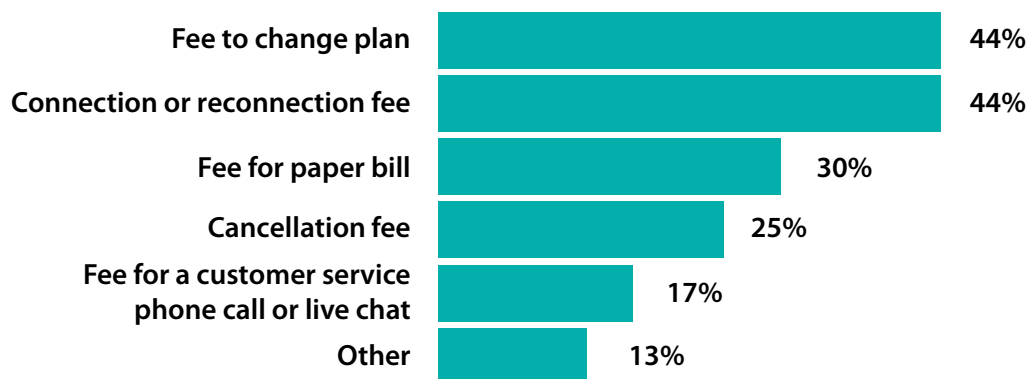
- ▶ 411
- ▶ 911
- ▶ Call forwarding
- ▶ Late charges
- ▶ Incoming calls and texts
- ▶ Texts to land lines
- ▶ Text from outside Canada

What are the most common types of unexpected service charges for cellphone accounts?

Those who indicated they had an unexpected service charge for their cellphone account were asked to identify the issue they experienced. Respondents could choose from a list of five items (multiple responses were allowed) or write in an ‘other’ response.

The top three unexpected service charges included: a fee to change plan (44%), a connection or reconnection fee (44%) and a fee for a paper bill (30%). The next highest responses were: cancellation fee (25%) and fee for a customer service phone call or live chat (17%).

Type of unexpected service charge for account.



Q: What was unexpected charge for your cell phone account? (Select all that apply)
Base: Had unexpected service charge for account (n=3,226)

Sample comments:

"To change my plan is a hassle and confusing. The bills are not straightforward and the cost went up without my consent at the end of a contract."

"I wasn't told when I purchased multiple devices there would be connection fees for each one of them!"

"Charges for paper bills and not being able to opt out of e-billing is another cost passed on the consumer. Billing type should be a consumer choice."

"Cancellation fees should be restricted to only the subsidized cost of the phone. Penalties for early cancellation are exorbitant, tying you to length of term and restricting consumer choice."

"If I call my service provider for something you can take care of online or their app they charge \$10. Why don't I get paid when they make an error and use 1.5 hours of my valuable time?"

Other comments:

Thirteen percent of respondents to this question wrote in an 'other' response. Some of the other themes raised in responses included: fees for services not requested/subscribed to; and fees for cancelled services.

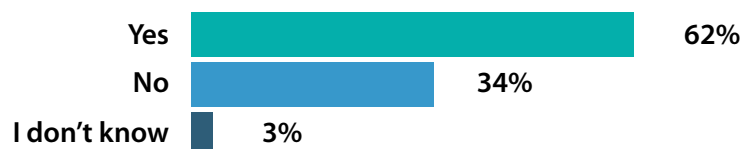
Other unexpected service charges included the following:

- ▶ 411
- ▶ 911/emergency services
- ▶ Access fees
- ▶ Monthly fees
- ▶ Late charges
- ▶ Activation fees
- ▶ Change of phone
- ▶ Change of phone number
- ▶ Unlocking fees
- ▶ Changes to plans
- ▶ Insurance
- ▶ Maintenance fees
- ▶ Upgrades & warranties

How many British Columbians have disputed an issue with their cellphone contract or bill?

Roughly six-in-ten (62%) respondents indicated having disputed an issue with their cellphone contract or bill.

Ever disputed issue with contract or bill

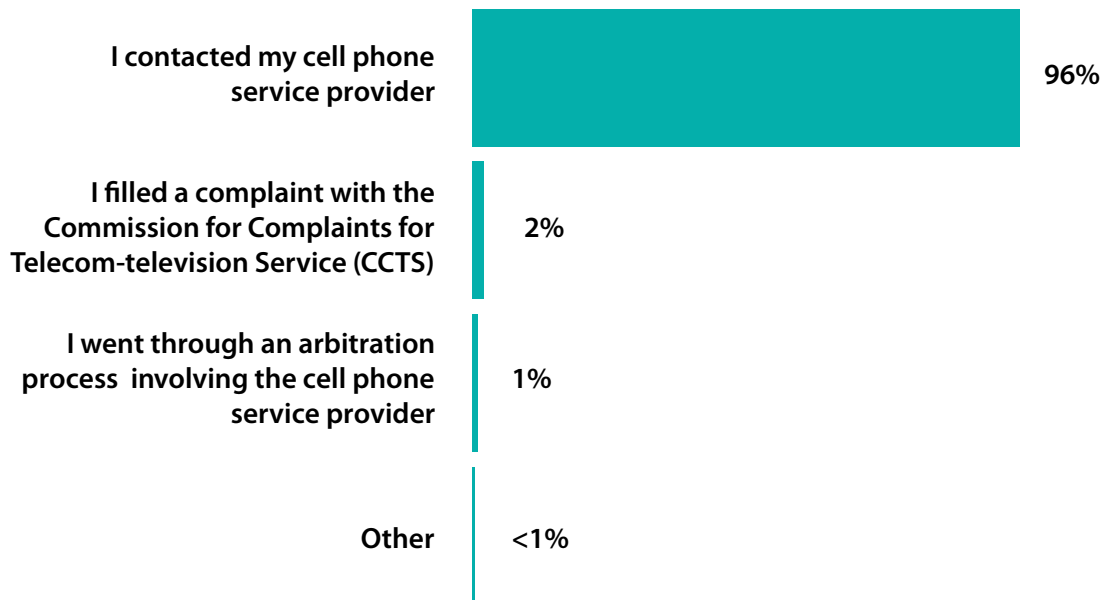


Q: Have you ever disputed an issue with your cell phone contract or bill? (Select one)
Base: All respondents (n=15,504) excluding no answer (n=45)

How was the issue with the contract or bill disputed?

Almost all (96%) of those who disputed an issue with their cellphone contract or bill did so by contacting their cellphone service provider. Very few filed a complaint with the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-television Services (2%) or underwent an arbitration process involving the cellphone provider (1%).

How disputed issue with contract or bill.



Q: How did you dispute the problem? (Select all that apply)
Base: Disputed issue (n=9,683) excluding no answer (n=10)

What was the result of the disputed issue with the contract or bill?

Those who disputed an issue with their contract or bill indicated having little satisfaction with the result, regardless of the dispute mechanism taken.

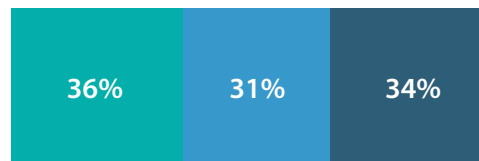
Of the 96% of respondents having contacted their cellphone service provider, only 22% were satisfied and an additional 44% were somewhat satisfied.

The highest satisfaction was among those who filed a complaint with the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-television Services, with 36% reporting they were satisfied and an additional 31% saying they were somewhat satisfied.

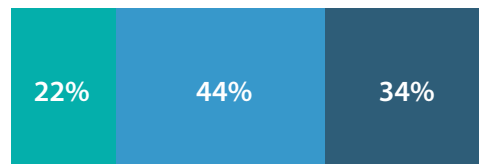
The lowest satisfaction was among the segment that underwent an arbitration process with their cellphone service provider. Only 11% of this segment were satisfied and an additional 40% were somewhat satisfied.

Satisfaction with result of dispute by method.

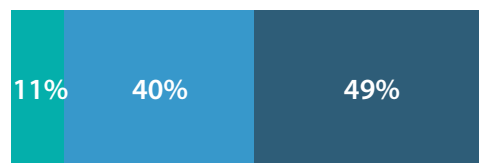
Were you satisfied with the result(s) of filing a complaint with the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-television Service (CCTS)?



Were you satisfied with the result(s) of contacting your cell phone provider?



Were you satisfied with the result(s) of the arbitration process?



Yes Somewhat No

Base: CCTS Complaint (n=202)

Base: Contacted cell provider (n=9,317) excluding no answer (n=4)

Base: Arbitration process (n=107)

Business Practices

The survey asked British Columbians about their experiences shopping for a cellphone service, including their views on cellphone sales and advertising.

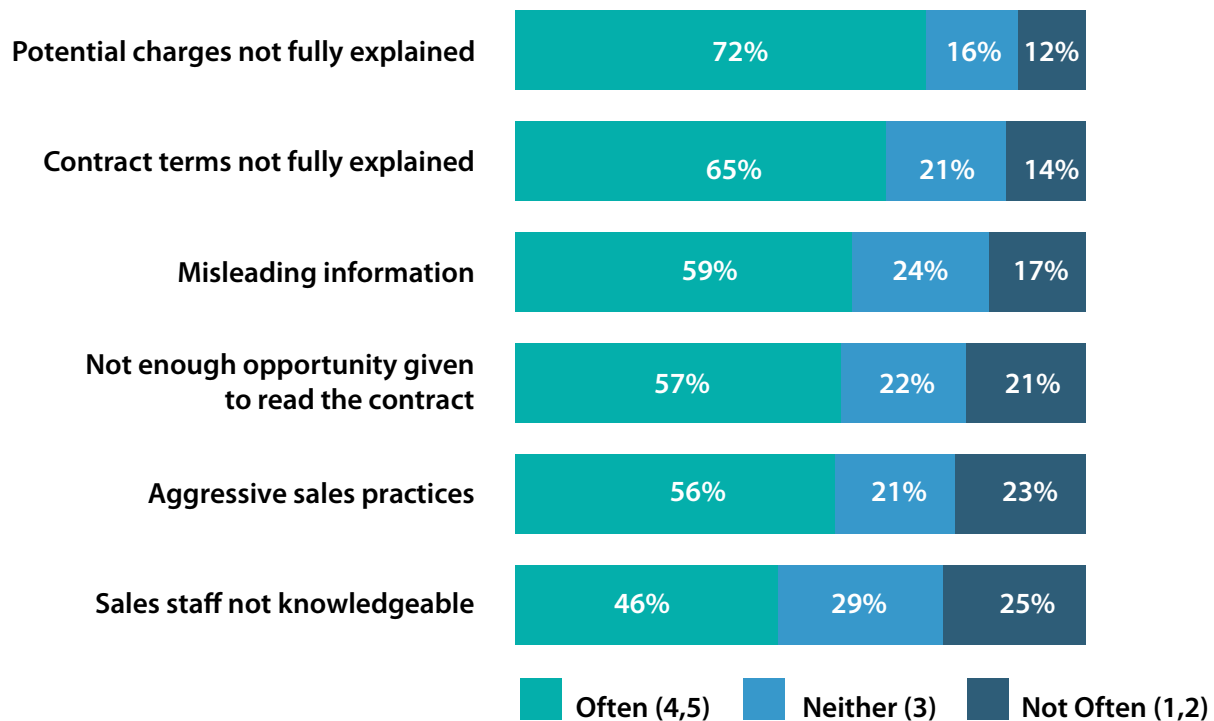
Survey respondents could indicate how often they have experienced six different issues when shopping for a cellphone service. All issues were asked on a 1 to 5 scale where 5 meant 'very often' and 1 meant 'never'. Answer choices 4 and 5 are summarized as often, answer choices 1 and 2 are summarized as not often and answer choice 3 is treated as neither.

What issues have British Columbians had when shopping for a cellphone service?

Roughly seven-in-ten (72%) respondents said they often experienced potential charges being not fully explained while shopping for cellphone services. Additionally, about two thirds of (65%) respondents felt that contract terms were not fully explained.

A majority also said they have often experienced: misleading information (59%), not having enough opportunity to read the contract (57%), and aggressive sales practices (56%). Slightly less than half (46%) indicated that sales staff were not knowledgeable.

Frequency of experiencing issues when shopping for cellphone service



Q: How often have you experienced the following when shopping for cell phone service? (Select one per item)
 Base: Varies by item (n=14,674 to n=15,160)

Sample comments:

"The whole process of buying a phone is confusing and one comes away from the experience wondering if they were ripped off."

"I believe that contracts need to be explained better and with more time to not rush the customer. I think there should be a fine or a penalty to the carrier for failure to explain the contract to an acceptable level."

"Employees are not taught how to properly relay to customers the actual contract details. Instead, they are pushed for sales quantity, not sales quality!"

"We need advertising to show real full cost, and not some imaginary unattainable low number."

"Plans should be standardized so it's possible to compare between competitors. Companies should be forced to use plain English."

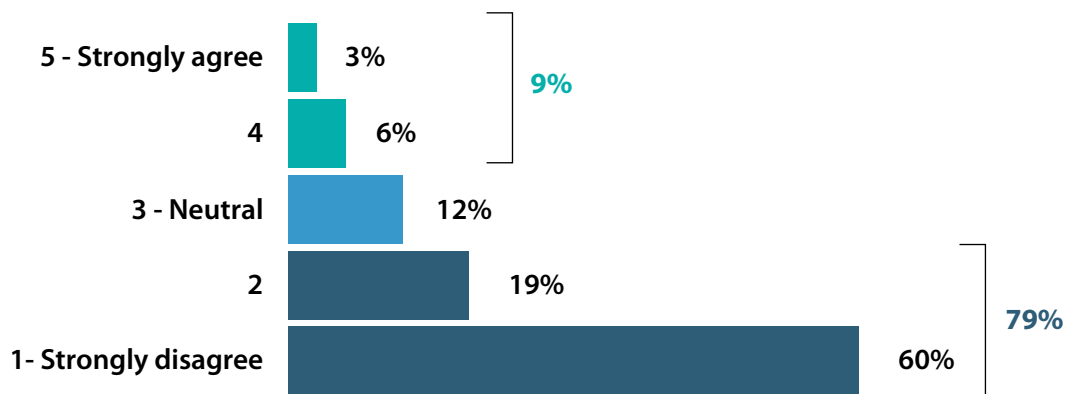
Value and Cost

The survey asked respondents to agree or disagree with two statements regarding the value and cost of their cellphone service.

Do British Columbians think they get good value for their cellphone service?

Only one-in-ten respondents (9%) agreed that with the statement that 'I get good value for my cellphone service.' A strong majority of eight-in-ten (79%) respondents disagreed with this statement, while one in ten (12%) was neutral.

Agreement: I get good value for my cellphone service



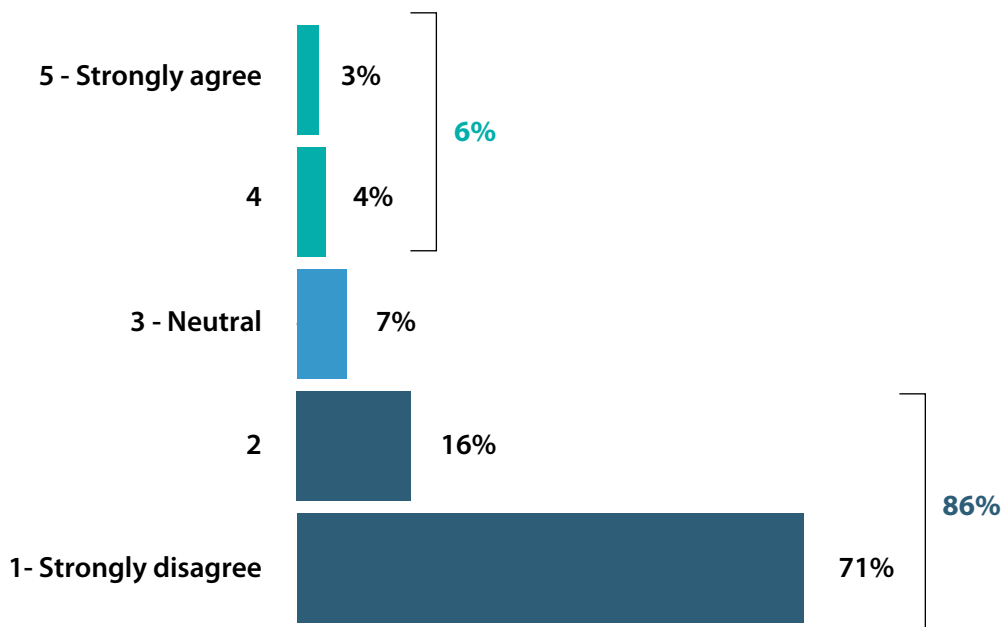
Q: Please identify your level of agreement with the following statements. (Select one per statement)

Base: All respondents (n=15,400) excluding not applicable (n=73) and no answer (n=76)

Do British Columbians think the cost of their cellphone service is reasonable?

Fewer than one-in-ten respondents (6%) agreed with the statement that 'the cost of my cellphone service is reasonable.' The vast majority (86%) of respondents disagreed the cost is reasonable, while fewer than one in ten (7%) were neutral.

Agreement: The cost of my cellphone service is reasonable.



Q: Please identify your level of agreement with the following statements. (Select one per statement)

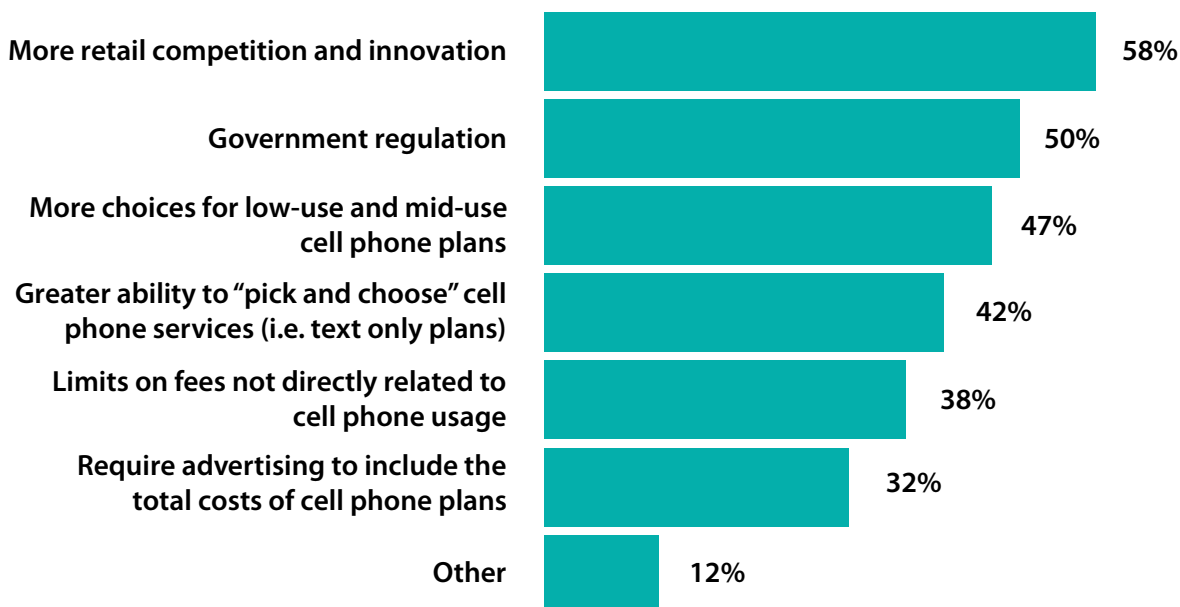
Base: All respondents (n=15,391) excluding not applicable (n=64) and no answer (n=94)

What top suggestions were made to reduce the cost of cellphone services?

All respondents were asked to select up to three suggestions (from a provided list of six suggestions) on how to reduce the cost of cellphone services for British Columbians. They could also write in an 'other' response.

The top three suggestions included: more retail competition and innovation (58%), government regulation (50%), and more choices for low-use and mid-use cellphone plans (47%).

Top suggestions for reducing cost of cellphone services (pick 3)



Q: What are your top three suggestions on how to reduce the cost of cell phone services for British Columbians? (Select up to three)

Base: All respondents (n=15,549)

Sample comments:

“More competition and government oversight would help with transparency and keeping costs down.”

“Regulate how much cellphone companies can charge for plans and have variety of plans to choose from.”

“The total cost of having a basic family cellphone plan should not be equivalent to a car payment. The cost is exorbitant. There should be much more competition in the market instead of the ‘big three’ [service providers]. People on low income should be able to have access to phone plans that are reasonable.”

“Plans should include choices to pick what you need and be more customized. For example, a customer might like to have a mailbox but no long distance. Or they may not have the need for a mailbox, but want to have more data and long distance.”

“Cellphone companies/providers need to be much more transparent about their costs (plans, fees, potential charges, etc.). It is usually unclear exactly why and by how much you will incur extra fees, or what is not included in your plan.”

Other comments:

Twelve percent of respondents to this question wrote in an ‘other’ response. Some of the other themes raised in responses included: limits/caps on fees related to cellphone usage; and nationalization or more government ownership of wireless services.

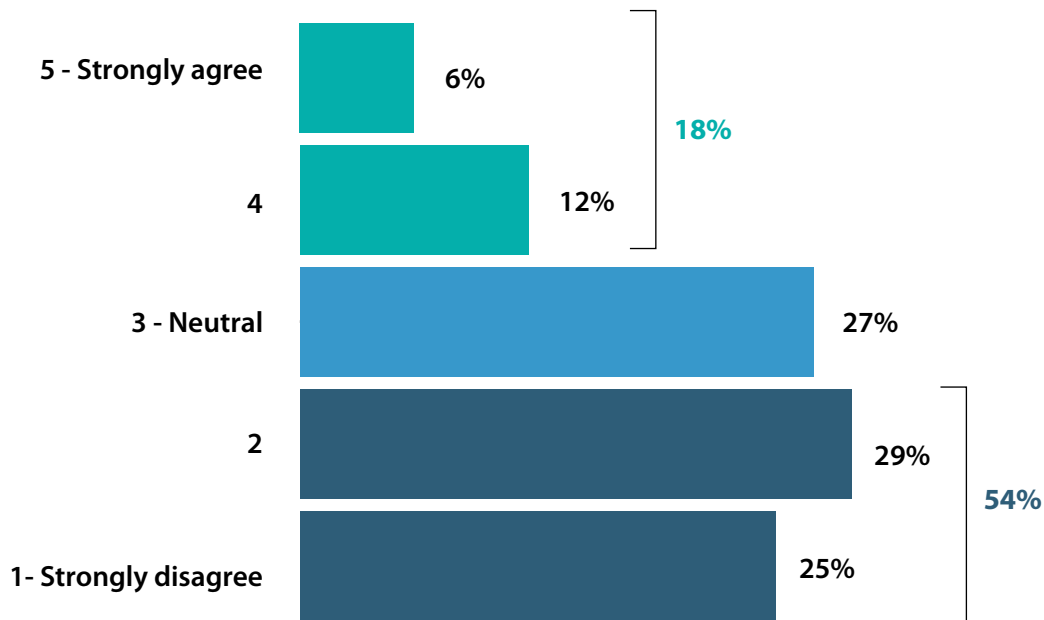
Consumer Rights and Responsibilities

Survey respondents were asked to agree or disagree with three statements regarding their rights and responsibilities as consumers when it comes to cellphone services.

Do consumers know their rights and responsibilities when it comes to cellphones?

Only about two-in-ten (18%) respondents agreed with the statement 'I know my rights and responsibilities as a consumer when it comes to cellphone services.' A slight majority (54%) disagreed that they know their rights and responsibilities, while about a quarter (27%) were neutral.

Agreement: I know my rights and responsibilities as a consumer when it comes to cellphone services.

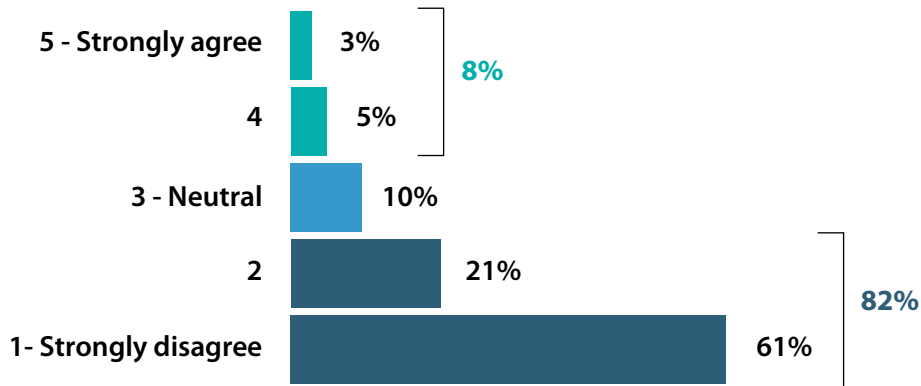


*Q: Please identify your level of agreement with the following statements. (Select one per statement)
Base: All respondents (n=15,473) excluding not applicable (n=55) and no answer (n=21)*

Are consumers familiar with the federal Wireless Code?

Fewer than one-in-ten (8%) respondents agreed with the statement 'I am familiar with the federal Wireless Code'. Eight-in-ten (82%) respondents disagreed they are familiar, while one in ten (10%) was neutral.

Agreement: I am familiar with the Federal Wireless Code.

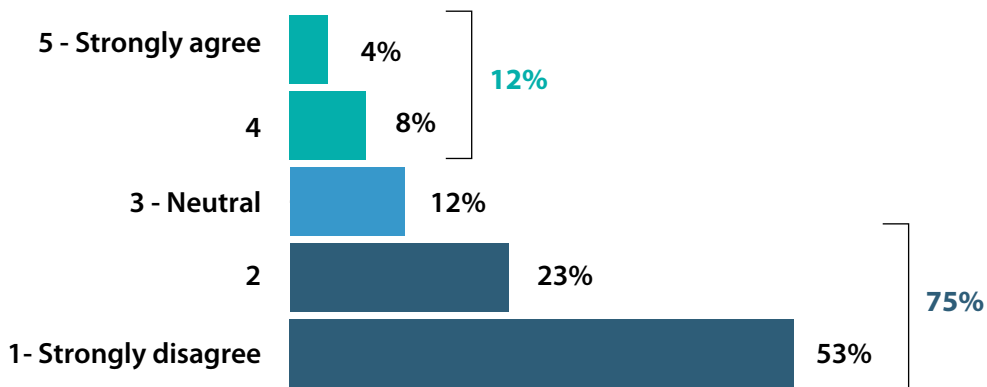


Q: Please identify your level of agreement with the following statements. (Select one per statement)
Base: All respondents (n=15,417) excluding not applicable (n=95) and no answer (n=37)

Are consumers familiar with the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-television Service (CCTS) complaint process?

Slightly more than one-in-ten (12%) respondents agreed with the statement 'I am familiar with the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-television Service (CCTS) complaint process.' Three quarters (75%) disagreed they are familiar with CCTS process, while about one in ten (12%) were neutral.

Agreement: I am familiar with the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-television Service (CCTS) complaint process.



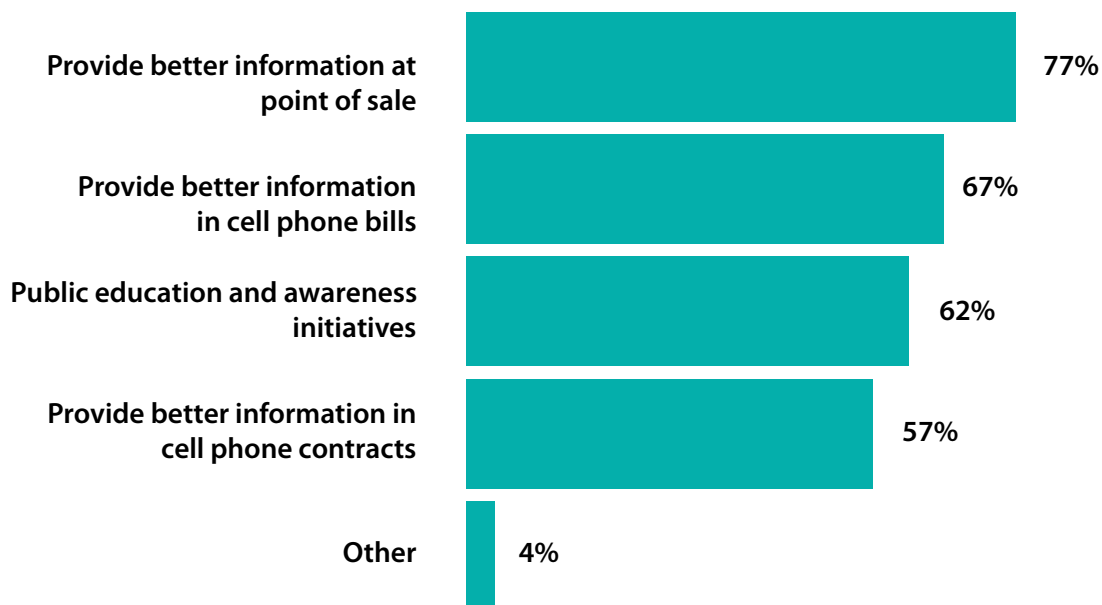
Q: Please identify your level of agreement with the following statements. (Select one per statement)
Base: All respondents (n=15,405) excluding not applicable (n=92) and no answer (n=52)

What top suggestions were made to increase consumers' awareness of their rights and responsibilities?

Respondents who disagreed with one or more of the three prior statements were asked to select up to three suggestions (from a provided list of four suggestions) on how to make British Columbians better aware of their rights and responsibilities when it comes to cellphone services. They could also write in an 'other' response.

The top three suggestions included, provide better information at point of sale (77%), provide better information in cellphone bills (67%) and public education and awareness initiatives (62%). A majority (57%) also stated preference for better information in cellphone contracts.

Top suggestions for increasing Awareness of cellphone service rights/responsibilities (Pick 3)



Q: What are your top three suggestions on how to British Columbians better aware of their rights and responsibilities when it comes to cell phone services? (Select up to three)

Base: Disagree with one or more prior statements (n=13,375)

Sample comments:

"There is a lack of explanation of contracts and consumer rights given at the point of sale which should be addressed."

"Links to the Wireless Code, CCTS, etc. and a short explanation of what they are and when you should consult them should be provided at the end of all contracts and bills."

“Everyone needs to be buyer aware, but there needs to a point of reference where people can go to tap into the sources, references, resources, policies, regulations, etc. available to help them for their consumerism education and understanding their rights.”

“Each cellphone provider should have a section on their websites that outlines consumer protection.”

Other comments:

Four percent of respondents to this question wrote in an ‘other’ response. However, most of these comments were either off-topic or repeated the answer choices provided to respondents.

What additional comments were made to strengthen consumer protections?

All respondents were asked to provide any additional comments to strengthen consumer protections regarding cellphone services. A total of 6,389 (41%) of all survey respondents provided additional comments. These comments were provided on an open-ended basis and were then coded into categories based on several broad themes.

The most frequent theme in comments related to value and cost. Seven-in-ten (71%) respondents answering this question provided comments concerning the affordability and cost of cellphone services. Many of these called for greater competition in the cellphone service provider market to reduce prices for consumers.

Other common themes related to business practices and to contracts and billing issues. Many comments repeated issues and concerns raised in responses to other survey questions and additional comments fields.

Conclusion

Government will analyze the survey results and continue to engage with stakeholder groups. Next steps include a legislative review of B.C.’s laws and consideration of options to enhance consumer protections around cellphone contracts and billing.

In the future, Government will also be taking citizen input to advocate on people’s behalf in the federally regulated telecom sector for better affordability and transparency.

Appendix: Respondent Characteristics

Cellphone Profile Questions

Almost all (99%) respondents said they have a personal cellphone. Most (70%) have an individual plan, while three-in-ten (29%) respondents have a shared/family plan. Most (75%) of those with a shared/family plan reported that they are the primary account holder.

The vast majority (91%) of respondents said they have a month-to-month or fixed term plan. Only 6% have a pay-as-you-go plan. Most respondents (71%) purchased their cellphone at a retail store or kiosk, while some purchased online through a website (12%), over the phone or via an online chat (10%), or from their employer (4%).

CELLPHONE PROFILE QUESTIONS

Have a personal cellphone? (n=15,490)	
Yes	99%
No	1%
Individual or shared plan? (n=15,500)	
Individual	70%
Shared (family)	29%
Prefer not to answer:	2%
Primary account holder (if shared)? (n=4,437)	
Yes	75%
No	25%

Type of plan? (n=15,517)	
Month-to-month or fixed term (i.e. postpaid)	91%
Pay-as-you-go	6%
Other	2%
Dont know	1%
Where purchased? (n=15,520)	
At a retail store or kiosk	71%
Online through a website	12%
Over the phone or via an online chat	10%
From my employer (i.e. employee purchase plan)	4%
From a door-to-door salesperson	<1%
From a telemarketer that called me	<1%
Other	2%
Don't know	1%

Demographic Profile

The age, regional and household income characteristics of the sample of survey respondents is shown in the chart below. Nearly six-in-ten (58%) respondents live in the Lower Mainland/Fraser Valley, nearly one-quarter (23%) live on Vancouver Island/Coast and one in ten (11%) live in Thompson/Okanagan.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE QUESTIONS

Age (n=15, 501)		Region (n=15,519)		Household Income (n=15,368)	
Under 19 years	1%	Lower Mainland/Fraser Valley	58%	Less than \$24,999	9%
19 to 29 years	21%	Vancouver Island/Coast	23%	\$25,00 to \$49,999	18%
30 to 39 years	27%	Thompson/Okanagan	11%	\$50,000 to \$74,999	20%
40 to 49 years	16%	Kootenay	3%	\$75,000 to \$99,999	16%
50 to 59 years	14%	Cariboo	2%	\$100,000 to \$124,999	12%
60 to 69 years	14%	North Coast	1%	\$125,000 to \$149,999	7%
70 years or over	7%	Nechako	1%	\$150,000 to \$174,999	4%
		Northeast	1%	\$175,000 or more	5%
		Outside BC	<1%	Don't know	9%



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COLUMBIA